Introduction to Fellowships

Focus: Postdoctoral

07/04/20
Purpose of a postdoctoral fellowship

During a fellowship you’ll be guided by a more experienced researcher (supervisor) while you undertake a project designed to:

• consolidate your existing research skills and experience
• explore new research areas; develop new research skills
• experience a new research environment
• develop your independence; expand your network of collaborators
• deliver key research contributions, e.g. publications
More than a project/an idea...

Fellowship evaluation is 50% (minimum) about (1) you & (2) the scientific environment:

right person - right supervisor - right place - right project - right time

(1) You should therefore ideally have (and be able to demonstrate):

• developed your own research ideas (or made significant contributions)
• delivered previous research projects (MSc, PhD, etc.)
• established collaborations

You'll also need to be able to describe your long-term research vision beyond this career stage (i.e. leading a research program)
More than a project/an idea...

(2) Highlight all potential advantages of the **scientific environment** for both your project and your career development:

- Scientific expertise of your supervisor (relevant key publications, etc.)
- Supervisory experience of the host (PhDs, PDs – and where alumni went)
- Supervisor’s international collaborative network
- Interdisciplinary design of IST: facilitates collaboration
- If the required expertise is not on campus: add a suitable collaborator
- SSUs: concentrated expertise, state-of-the-art facilities and support
- Career counselor (faculty recruiting experience); Career workshops
Timing is everything

Start writing one year before you need the funding!

Note 1: While not all fellowships pay IST salary rates, IST (i.e. your group leader) top-up fellowship salaries

Note 2: The following summaries are based on IST as host. Many come with additional mobility allowances, family/child allowances, etc.
**Funder:** Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

The FWF’s career portfolio currently consists of 5 programs:

- **Lise Meitner** (‘incoming’ postdocs to AT)
- **Erwin Schrödinger** (outgoing ‘Austrian’ postdocs)
- **Hertha Firnberg** (junior female ‘Austrian’ postdocs)
- **Elise Richter** (senior female ‘Austrian’ postdocs)
- **START** (senior postdocs/junior Group Leaders)

‘incoming’ researcher: < 2 yr working in AT & < 3 of past 10 yr in AT
‘Austrian’ researcher: > 2 yr working in AT OR > 3 of past 10 yr in AT
Funder: Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

Revamp of the FWF career portfolio starting 2021.

Meitner and Firnberg programs to be merged:

• ‘Early career stage’ postdoc program (starts Spring 2021)
  No residency rule or gender limitation (min. 50% of funding reserved for female candidates)

Richter and START programs to be harmonized:

• ‘Advanced career stage’ postdoc program (Autumn 2021?)

Existing programs to run as usual in 2020
**Scheme:** Lise Meitner Program

**Focus and purpose**

**Career development for applicant:** What do you get from project/Host/IST?

**Brain-gain for AT:** What does Host/IST/AT get from you? (skills/collaborations/directions)

**At a glance**

**Benefits:** 2 yr salary (100%) + Research & Training costs (12k EUR/yr)

**Eligibility:** ‘incoming’ researcher; 2 pubs in past 5 years; PhD (or within 4 mths)

**Application:** Proposal (20 page) + Career Plan (2 page) + Host letter + Recommendation letter (optional)

**Submission:** Continuous submission; Processing time 4-5 months
ISTips

Earlier submission better, but later submission possible (i.e. up to 2 year limit) if project sufficiently demonstrates ‘added value’ of project/fellowship

Build program purpose into project design and career plan. Add specific dedicated sections in proposal (i.e. section 2.3.2: why you - why this Host - why IST)

If a recommendation letter is optional – take the option! (but guide it…)

Don’t forget to highlight the innovative/original elements. This was added as a specific reviewer question to all FWF schemes in 2019 – the very first question…
Schemes: Hertha Firnberg & Elise Richter

Focus and purpose

**Firnberg:** First ‘independence’ and establishment in the intl. scientific community

**Richter:** Post-project the fellow will be qualified to apply for professorial positions

At a glance

**Benefits:**
- **Firnberg:** 3 yr salary (100%) + Research & Training costs (12k EUR/yr)
- **Richter:** 1-4 yr salary (100%) + Research & Training costs (15k EUR/yr)

**Eligibility:**
- Female ‘Austrian’ researcher; 2 publications in past 5 years
  - **Firnberg:** PhD (or within 4 months); **Richter:** min. 2 yr PD experience

**Application:** Proposal (20 page) + Career Plan (2 page) + Host/Sponsor letter + Rec. letter (opt.)

**Submission:** 29/05/2020 & end-Nov 2020; Processing time 6 months
Schemes: Hertha Firnberg & Elise Richter

ISTips

Many of the tips for the Lise Meitner Program also relevant for these programs

Firnberg: Present a well-rounded program to advance/enhance all aspects of your career – skills, teaching, publications, top (international) collaborations

Richter: More focused on addressing specific aspects of your career – establishing research niche, key skills, key publications (incl. last author – remember this program requires a sponsor rather than a supervisor)
Funder: H2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
Scheme: Individual Fellowship (European)

Focus and purpose

Career development: Growth as a scientist through the project/Host/IST
Knowledge transfer: Specifically between applicant-host and applicant-public

At a glance

Benefits: 2 yr salary (100%) + Research & Training costs (10k EUR/yr)
Eligibility: < 12 months in AT in past 3 years; PhD (or 48 months research exp.)
Application: Proposal (10 page): Excellence - Impact - Implementation
Submission: 09/09/20; Processing time 5 months
Scheme: MSCA Individual Fellowship

ISTips

Career, career, career: Must represent a significant step towards career goal (or don’t bother)

‘Impact’ & ‘Implementation’: Worth 50% - do not underestimate/undersell

Be specific: Detail gives proposal personality (which conferences, which target groups...)

Every sub-section matters: If you don’t write something substantial, reviewers can’t give you the marks (see NCP handbook for taste of detail required)

Highly competitive: 5/5 in ‘Excellence’, 4/5 in both ‘Impact’ & ‘Implementation’ - rejected

Address weaknesses in CV: Decide on your project early and design to build CV
Funder: European Molecular Biology Org. (EMBO)
Scheme: Long-Term Fellowship (LTF)

Focus and purpose

Promoting excellence: Based on previous achievements of the applicant and host
Novelty & biological significance: Should explore different topic to the PhD project

At a glance

Benefits: 2 yr salary (100%) + EMBO Laboratory Leadership course
Eligibility: < 6 mths at IST/in AT; PhD < 2 yrs (or by fellowship start); min. 1 pub
Application: Online text boxes + Host acceptance form + 2 referee statements
Submission: 14/08/20; Interview stage; Processing time 4 months
Scheme: EMBO Long-Term Fellowship

ISTips

Pre-screening based on:
- Applicant’s CV & three most important publications,
- ‘Summary and biological significance of the proposed work’ (250 words!),
- ‘Justification for choice of the host lab’ (200 words!),
- Reference and acceptance letters.

Note this does not actually include the proposal. Make sure not to write the sections above as an afterthought: they should include everything required (only 30% pass pre-screening). Contact reviewers early and provide all required information to write a meaningful letter.
Funder: Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP)

Schemes: Long-Term (LTF) & Cross-Disciplinary (CDF) Fellowships

Focus and purpose

**Frontier, potentially transformative research:** High-risk projects encouraged

**Interdisciplinary:** Challenge existing paradigms using novel approaches & techniques

**LTF:** Project signif. different to PhD & previous PD; **CDF:** PhD outside life sciences

At a glance

**Benefits:** 3 yr salary (~65%) + Research and Travel allowance (4.5k EUR/year)

**Eligibility:** Joined IST/AT post-01/04/20; PhD < 3 yrs; min. 1 pub; New collaboration

**Application:** Online text boxes + Host statement + Referee statements

**Submission:** August 2020; Processing time 8 months
**Schemes:** HFSP LTF & CDF

**ISTips**

**Remember:** You cannot propose to work with: • former scientific collaborators; • former research supervisors; • any other scientist with whom you have worked or published.

In first stage, each proposal is given an overall rating (A/B/C/D) that combines the excellence of the applicant, project and host laboratory as well as brief written comments.

Highest rated applications (~20%) discussed during a 3-day review committee meeting. Revised reviews rating the applicant, the project, and the host laboratory separately: A=outstanding, B=excellent, C=accomplished, D=less competitive.

Equal importance: Write each section as if the entire review hinged on this
Funder: Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW)
Scheme: DOC Fellowship

Focus and purpose

Track-record of excellence: University transcripts considered, publications, mobility
High-quality doctoral project: Clear, important research question; suitable host

At a glance

Benefits: 2-3 yr salary (~80%) + Travel allowance (0.5k EUR/year)
Eligibility: MSc/Diploma post-01/01/18; If no MSc, Qual. Exam date considered
Application: Proposal (20 pages) + Transcripts + Motivation letter + Host statement
Submission: 15/09/20; Processing time 6 months
Scheme: ÖAW DOC Fellowship

ISTips

• Be realistic: We’ve never received a reviewer comment that something was not ambitious enough

• Demonstrate you have the required skills: If you don’t yet have these, detail how you will acquire them

• Passion for the project should shine though: If you’re not enthusiastic about writing this, no-one will be enthusiastic about reading it...

• Previous publications are a big help...
A selection of other fellowships your colleagues have applied for...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
<th>Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>Fulbright</td>
<td>fellowship</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>SNF</td>
<td>Advanced post-doc mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>NFB</td>
<td>Science Call</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>SNF</td>
<td>Early post-doc mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>OeAD</td>
<td>Ernst Mach</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>PD Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>OeAD</td>
<td>Stipendiumstiftung der Republik Österreich</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin</td>
<td>WIKO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>OeAD</td>
<td>Action AT/(SK/HU/CZ)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>BBR Foundation</td>
<td>NARSAD YI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>A v. Humboldt</td>
<td>Feodor Lynen Research Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Chinese Scholarship Council</td>
<td>PhD fellowships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>AXA Research Fund</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Dan David Scholarship</td>
<td>Scholarships for postdocs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>BIF</td>
<td>PhD fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Anita Borg Memorial Scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Branco Weiss Fellowship</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>PhD Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>DFG</td>
<td>Forschungsstipendium</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>PhD fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Engelhorn_Stiftung</td>
<td>PD Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>JSPS</td>
<td>JSPS PD Fellowships for Research Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>FEBS</td>
<td>LTF</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>Research fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Fondation Fyssen</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>NIH</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Juselius Foundation</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>SERB</td>
<td>Oversea postdoctoral fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Martin_Escudero_Foundation</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Templeton</td>
<td>Independent Research Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Max Planck Gesellschaft</td>
<td>Promotionsstipendium</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Uehara Memorial Foundation</td>
<td>PD Auslandsstipendium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Max Planck Gesellschaft</td>
<td>Postdoc-Stipendium Ausland</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>FONDECYT</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>NWO</td>
<td>Rubicon (Life Sciences)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Stiftlesernas postdoc pool</td>
<td>Postdoctoral fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Ramon Areces Foundation</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t forget the outgoing fellowships of your national funding agency (similar to the FWF Erwin Schrödinger Program)
Grant Office: Fellowship approval process

What we require

• Let us know you are applying at least three weeks before
• New: Complete short ethics overview form
• Provide a draft ASAP to ensure compatibility with program rules and IST employee rules, ethics and IP rules
• Supervisor confirmation: group size, salary and other costs

What we offer

• Can secure official IST signature (i.e. President)
• Can provide guidance on identifying suitable schemes
• Can provide guidance and feedback on proposal structure and focus
• Can correspond with funding agencies on your behalf
Final thoughts

Further reasons to apply for a fellowship:

• Reviewer Feedback (usually) quite constructive
• Crystalizes research idea
• Never a bad idea to articulate your ‘career plan’
• Establish a track record
• Gain independence
• Establish/provide a network (and access to further funding e.g. EMBO Adv., HFSP CDA)
Next ‘career development series’ talk

*How to choose a postdoc & how to get the most out of it*

14/04/20 (16:00)

Next ‘fellowship’ installment

*Fellowship writing: right person/place/project*

21/04/20 (16:00)

Questions? - grants@ist.ac.at